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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 000109

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [SP](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN: NO DECISION YET ON ISAF STAGE II
CONTRIBUTION

REF: STATE 02743

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRS BOB MANZANARES; REASON 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Poloff delivered reftel points to Deputy National Security Adviser Maria Jesus Alonso on 1/11, following up on recent Embassy calls on Alonso and other GOS officials to encourage Spanish participation in ISAF Stage II through leadership of a PRT. Poloff stressed the importance of the issue to the USG and to NATO of Spanish participation at a substantive level. Poloff said that the USG had been confused by mixed signals regarding Spain's readiness to participating in NATO expansion into western Afghanistan. On the one hand, we understood from our GOS interlocutors in Madrid that President Zapatero has made no decision regarding the scope and nature of the Spanish deployment in ISAF II and that Spain's new requirement of "consultations" with Parliament prior to new deployments presented a further political complication. However, in NATO/ISAF councils, Spanish officials indicated a readiness to proceed with new deployments, including a possible PRT. Specifically, Spanish officials on a recent scouting mission to Afghanistan seemed prepared to support a doubling of the Spanish deployment to 1,000 troops and perhaps to take on a PRT in Qaleh-ye and/or the Herat FSB. The USG took this to mean that Spain is leaning towards leading a PRT.

2. (C) Alonso said that Spain understood its commitment to the NATO mission in Afghanistan and would continue to participate in that mission. She emphasized that the composition of Spanish forces would be based primarily on the recommendations of the MFA and MOD. While she hadn't yet seen the recommendations of the Spanish team that visited Afghanistan January 7-10, she said their input would be important in operational terms. Alonso said she did not expect the requirement for consultations with Parliament to be a problem, except with respect to timing since Parliament does not reconvene until the first week in February. She cautioned, however, that the GOS had to bear in mind public skepticism of Spanish involvement in virtually any military mission, which Afghanistan certainly was despite the humanitarian component. Also, she suggested that Spain's recent deployment to support tsunami relief operations in Indonesia (594 troops, five airplanes, two helicopters, a medical unit, and several ships) had stretched Spanish manpower and resources, which might present a problem GOS planners hadn't foreseen with respect to the GOS contribution to Afghanistan. The mission in Indonesia is currently expected to last two months.

3. (C) Poloff also delivered reftel points to MFA Deputy Director General for Foreign Policy Felix Costales and noted our confusion regarding Spain's position on leading a PRT. Costales said that a PRT would be a very new type of project for the GOS and that there were ongoing internal discussions regarding the composition of a Spanish-led PRT. Most importantly, Spain did not want a primarily military PRT such as those led by the U.S. and the UK, but instead wanted to emphasize the humanitarian aspect of such a mission. Like Alonso, Costales noted that Spain's delivery of aid and assistance to victims of the tsunami disaster presented a possible complication for Spain's contribution to ISAF Stage II.

//COMMENT//

4. (C) We have heavily lobbied the GOS at all levels of the MOD, MFA, and the President's staff to lead a PRT and/or other important missions in Afghanistan. General B. B. Bell made a strong pitch to Spanish officers on the margins of a 1/10 visit to his NATO counterpart in Madrid. While the GOS military is clearly anxious to take on a larger role, their political leaders are far more cautious. In a recent meeting with Charge, National Security Adviser equivalent Carles Casajuana was adamant that no new Spanish deployment could move forward without Parliamentary approval. Spain's contribution to tsunami relief operations is a new twist and could tempt the GOS to further delay a tough decision on its participation in ISAF II. We will continue to push the GOS hard on this issue, but recognize that their strong aversion to operations that could result in military casualties is a very significant impediment. Zapatero's officials are well aware that the popularity of his government is based mainly on his reversal of former President Aznar's unpopular decision to deploy Spanish forces to Iraq. The GOS does not

want to give the opposition a similar opportunity.
MANZANARES